

A
S E R M O N

Preached before

His Majesty

A T
W H I T E H A L L

March 27th 1664.

B Y

The Right Reverend Father in God
B. Lord Bishop of *Lincoln. &c.*

L O N D O N,

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St MARC. 4. 24.

—Take heed what you hear.

TO take heed is always good, but most necessary when danger is least suspected; we have therefore more need to look to our hearing, because of all other things we may think that hath least need of it. If it had been a *Caveat* upon the Tongue, Take heed what you say; there is reason enough for that; for *the tongue is a world of iniquity, it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of Nature.* But for hearing, that seems a harmless innocent thing, meerly passive, no man the worse for it: And this makes us sit down securely to hear any thing: But *take heed*;

Jam. 3. 6.

Hearing is no such harmless thing : Though hearing ill, be not doing ill, yet at length it may bring us to it ; it is a door to let it in upon us. We are all set in the midst of Temptations and Enemies, and cannot be safe unless we have a watch and guard upon the passages.

As *David*, considering the mischiefs that came by intemperate and unadvis'd speaking, wisely resolv'd to set a watch at the door of his lips ; *Dixi, Custodiam ; I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue* : So another guard will be as necessary at the ear, that nothing go in or out, in at the ear, or out at the mouth, that may betray us to our Enemies. If we look not to our ears, they will soon become guilty of the corruptions of the heart ; as when we hear the flatterer it corrupts our judgment of our selves ; the tale-bearer or slanderer, it corrupts our judgment of others. If we hearken to profane, filthy, atheistical communication, it poisons the whole man ; for *evil words corrupt good manners*. Thus the ear by letting in, may prove as ill as the tongue by letting out, a world of iniquity too. A little care here will prevent a great deal of mischief ;

chief ; take it at 'large ; for it is good for all Persons, for all Places, for all Times. But the *Caveat* of the Text comes neerer to us ; it follows us to Church, where we think our selves out of all danger ; and yet nearer to the very business we come about, the hearing of Gods Word ; an imployment so safe from danger, that we think no care is to be taken, unless it be to get a place to hear in : For concerning this hearing is the advice given upon occasion of the Parable of the Sower, that went before, wherein our Saviour himself interprets the Seed to be God's Word, and the Soil in which it was sown to be the Hearers. Of four several sorts, but one came to good. It is a great odds, and yet I wish it were not often greater ; three to one of the Hearers miscarried, and the fault was only in the hearing. It is therefore very seasonable for us that are come to hear, and especially at this time of *Lent*, when there is more of this Seed sown then at any other time of the year. Where the loss will be more, the care should be greater. *Take heed what you hear.* This is the Argument whereof with Gods blessing we are now to treat.

Concerning

Concerning our care about hearing, it will not be amiss to bestow the first part of it about the meaning of the Words. S^t Luke relates the same passage with some difference.

Take heed how you hear. That which is *quid* here, is *quomodo* there. The difficulty will be, Whether S^t Mark should expound S^t Luke, or S^t Luke S^t Mark ? for in relating matter of fact, the truth must be one, though the words differ : And yet the words do not so differ, but that in Scripture the one is sometimes taken for the other, *quid* for *quomodo*, and *quomodo* for *quid* : Gen. 2. 19. God brought all the beasts of the field and fowls of the air to Adam, to see what he would call them. What, that is *How* ; there is *quid* for *quomodo*. On the other side, Luk. 10. 26. we have *quomodo* for *quid* : What is written in the Law ? how readest thou ? *How*, that is, What readest thou ?

Though this promiscuous use of the phrases will serve to reconcile the Evangelists, that they might mean the same thing in different words ; yet will it not serve to find out which that meaning should be. It will be a safe

safe course therefore to take both in ; for though *vi verborum* we can not, yet, which is lawful in a Preacher, *vi consequentiae* we may ; for they are so close woven together, that one cannot well go without the other. It will be to no purpose how we hear, unless we hear what we should : and it will be to as little to hear what we should, if we care not how we hear it. If we take them both in, they will compleat our care in the two parts of it, and also make two Points of the Sermon, What we hear, and How we hear.

1. Take heed what----

But how can that be given in caution to the Hearer which is not in his power ? for it is wholly at the choice of the Speaker what we hear : When the Ear is open it must hear what is spoken, whether it be good or bad. True, if the Precept had been given to the Ear, so it must be ; but it is given to the Hearer, to him that hath an *Imperium* and ruling of that and all the other senses. If the reason or will shall command, the Eare will open or shut, like or dislike. It is not simple hearing, the Sense it self is not capable of advice, but mix'd. St. Paul gives the reason why the Gospel being preach'd to the

Heb. 4. 2.

Jews

Jews did not profit them, because not mix'd with Faith in them that heard it. It is not simple hearing, but mix'd with a more noble part of the Soul that guides it. And so to take heed what you hear, is in effect to take heed what Faith and Credit you give to that you hear; for so it follows in the Verse, *With what measure you mete it shall be measur'd to you*, the benefit will answer to the care, measure for measure. But what different measure can there be of that which differs not? Gods Word is from everlasting unchangeable. *The grass may wither, and the flower thereof may fade away*, saith St. Peter, *but the word of the Lord endureth for ever*; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you, 1 Pet. 1. ult.

1 Pet. 1. ult.

Though Gods word be one in it self, yet that one hath been made known to the world in different wayes and Degrees, and so requires a hearing proportionable to them. *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in times past to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last dayes spoken by his Son*. And likewise that which the Son spake in those last days, the days of the Gospel, was in divers manners. For first he spake by him-
self

Heb. 1. 2.

self in person, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.* That which he preached was certainly Gods word. And when he left the world to go to his Father, he sent the Holy Ghost from Heaven, who in the mouth of the Apostles preached the same Gospel; for those holy men spake not by the will of man, but as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost. And therefore this also was truly the word of God. And when the Church was thus founded by the preaching of the Holy Ghost, for the propagation of it to all times, after, it pleased God to give it in Writing, in a Scripture, and that by inspiration of the same Spirit which before preached it. So as now we need not ascend to Heaven to fetch Christ down, nor the Holy Ghost, as some pretend to do to know Gods will, but to receive it onely from that Scripture. Thus far we have the Word of God in *Proper*, (*i. e.*) immediately out of the mouth of God, and our hearing must be absolute for the matter, we must say with *Samuel*, *Speak Lord for thy servant heareth.*

Luke 4. 18.

2 Pet. 1. 24

But when it pleased God to commit the dispensing of that word to the Pastors of the

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Church

Church, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, *Ephes. 4. 12.* Now the word of God was come into the hands of men subject to infirmities and error, who may both deceive themselves and others. And here our Saviours advice comes in season, *Take heed what you hear.* Before, Gods word was in the Original, but here onely in the Transcript, or Copy; and some Copyings are more happy then others, and come nearer the Original, and therefore not all of the same value and esteem. All Preachers are not to be heard alike, nor all Sermons. The word of God in them is so the water of Life, that it often tastes of the mineral, through which it runs, and hath a tincture from the earthen Vessel that brings it, and therefore not to be receiv'd with that measure of trust which belongs to the pure and proper word of God. For, take a Sermon at the best, the most you can make of it is, that it is Gods word onely in a qualified sense, because the Church intends it should be so; and it is the preachers judgement and opinion that it is so; and possibly it may be so indeed. But then because possibly it may not be so, we had need *take heed what we hear.* We

We learn from St. *Paul* that it was more than possible, it was truly so then; for he warns *Timothy* of Preachers that will strive about words to no purpose, but to the subversion of the hearers, *2 Tim. 2. 14.* And ver. 16. *By prophane and vain bablings do increase to more ungodliness.* And v. 17. *Their word will eat as doth a Canker, or a Gangrain;* for so the Greek word is; and that's a dangerous Disease, and by all means possible to be avoided, and especially to be taken heed of. Thus it was in the early times of the Church, we have reason then to look for worse after, and so we of late times found it by sad experience: Not onely profane and vain babblings, but Sedition, Treason, Rebellion were dressed up and appear'd in the likeness of Sermons. It is too plain, we have but too much need of caution to take heed.

But alas! what should private men do? must they, or can they call all Preachers and Doctrines to account? The Scriptures indeed which are the undoubted Word of God would do it if well manag'd, but how can that be hoped from every hand? wherein wise, that is, learned men, are mistaken, and from whence every Sect seeks Patronage, and

perswades it self to have it. What means is there then left by the help whereof we may take heed what we hear. Truly none that I know, but this still, the Scriptures are the only infallible rule.

But how ! Not left loose to the prejudices and fancies of every man ; for then it will fall out, as with those that look in a Glass, in which every one sees his own face, though not anothers ; the reason is because he brings his face to the Glass, not because it was there before. So every Sect sees the face of his own Religion in the Scripture, not because it was there before, but because his strong fancy and prejudice brought it thither ; he thinks he sees that in the Scripture, which in truth is onely in his own imagination.

But how then can we have any help from the Scriptures to take heed what we hear ? Not as Gods word lies diffus'd through the whole body of them ; but as prepar'd and fitted up in a summary and short form of wholsom words by such to whom the care of the Church is committed.

If any shall think this a humane invention derogatory to the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Let him implead *St. Paul* first, who made

made the same use of it, finding what mischief false Teachers had done, charges Timothy with the care of it, 2 Tim. 1. 13. *ἵστανται τὴν ὑγιαίνονταν λόγον.* Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me. This form he calls in the last verse of the former Epistle *τὴν παρακαταθήκην*, a depositum committed to his trust, and for that very purpose that he might avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of Science falsely so called; and that is plainly, that they might take heed what they hear.

The same course was taken by the whole Church after considering how hard, or rather impossible it was for every one out of the Scriptures to work out to himself an assurance of the knowledge of as much as was necessary to salvation, and with that a consent with the rest of the faithful, who are commanded to speak and think the same things, which cannot be done but in a certain form of words. Such a form, if not the same with S. Paul *ὑποτύπωσις*, was the Apostles Creed, the use whereof hath ever since continued in the Church to be a help to take heed what we believe.

1 Cor. 1. 10

The same course was of later times held by
divers

divers particular National Churches, who weary with the insolence and domineering of their Sister at *Rome*, did *suo jure uti*, and provide for themselves, which fell out in a time when the world was filled with Controversies and Disputes of Religion. That the people might not be carried about with every wind of doctrine, that blew from all corners, it was their care, and wisdom to compose a form of wholesome words in their several Confessions, to be a rule what to hear.

Now following our Saviours advice, you have reason to ask, With what measure of Faith are these confessions to be received; for, *Quis custodiet ipsum custodem?* What credit must be given to that which must be a rule how far we credit others? That we mistake not, They are not to be received with that faith which is due to Gods word, or any thing out of it as necessary to salvation; but with such as wise men would give to the means of settling unity and consent in matters controverted, as the title of our Confession imports; that is, That they are Articles of Peace not Articles of Faith. They make no new Religion or new Faith.

This, by the way, gives an easie Answer
to

to the Papists hard Question, as they think ; *Where was your Religion before Luther? Where was your Church before the 39. Articles?* We do not date our Religion from those Articles. The Church of *England* (I grant) is call'd so from their Confession, but by an accidental denomination ; *i. e.* It is that Church which for preservation of unity and peace in it, injoyns nothing to be taught or heard for God's Word which is repugnant to them in the particulars there mentioned. But for the essential denomination of our Faith, whereon Salvation depends, it is the Faith of God's Word, summ'd up in the ancient Catholick and Apostolick Forms ; as is evident from our Constitutions and Practise. For when any is received as a Member into the Church by Baptism, the Laver of Regeneration, no other Faith is required but that which is comprised in the Apostles Creed. And when by a confession of our Faith and Sins, we prepare to receive the other Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, our Faith is that according to the ancient *Nicene* Creed. And in the Office of Visiting the Sick, the Absolution (a Comfort at all times, and most of all when we give up our Souls into the
Hands

Hands of God) is not to be administred but to those that make confession as well of their Faith as of their Sins ; and that Faith is only according to the Apostles Creed. Thus are we born, nourish'd, and dissolv'd by the same Faith, according to the ancient Catholick and Apostolick Forms. A Faith of this age neither ought they to reproach, nor we to be asham'd of.

To return to our particular Church Confession ; it hath another end and use ; they are Articles of peace and consent in certain Controversies to instruct and help us to take heed what we hear.

But it will not be so taken by all ; for the Churches Remedy is the Seciaries Disease, who complain, That by this means the liberty of the Spirit and of the Conscience are penn'd up in those Forms ; and, which is a worse mischief, if it were true, a binding of God's Word, which ought to be free : But for that God's Word neither is nor can be bound. The Forms are no more but the gathering together some of those Waters which flow all over the Scriptures, into a stream, to fit them for the ease and use of all. But they say, they take a better course to
fetch

fetch all from the Fountain. The Fountain indeed is purer ; but I see no reason why the Water should be purer in their Pitchers than in the Churches Stream, seeing both claim immediately to the same Fountain.

They say again, That these Forms are no better than snares, to hinder many a painful Preacher of the Gospel. They would seem careful to unbind God's Word ; but I see it is to set themselves at liberty. As for painfulness in Preaching , if it be not to some good purpose, I shall not much reckon upon.

The Pharisees compassed Sea and Land, but it was to make Pharisees, Profelytes of their Faction, not of Religion.

Mat.23.13.

Nay, but they preach the Gospel. The Gospel is a glorious Word ; but what Gospel ? A Gospel you may perhaps have enough of, and too much : S. Paul informs Timothy of *perilous times to come, when men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded.*

2 Tim.3.1.

How think you comes it to pass that there shall be such a general Apostacy ? was it

not for want of preaching ? They had no Sermons, or perhaps no great affection for them ; they were some cold hearers, that were content with one Sermon a day. No, that was not the matter ; if we read on to the next Chapter we shall find they had hearing enough ; for they were such as heap'd to themselves Teachers, and so had heaps of Sermons, and affection for them too ; for they had itching ears. What was it then ? They could not away with sound Doctrine, but would have Teachers after their own lusts ; they had the Gospel in plenty , but it was *Evangelium* ~~iniquum~~ not *verum* ; after their own lusts, not of sound Doctrine.

But what is sound Doctrine ? *S. Paul* doth not say here, because a little before he had given *Timothy* a form of it, Keep the Form of sound words which thou hast heard from me ; and because their Gospel did not agree to that, he chargeth him to avoid it. So should we do too with such a Gospel as will not stand within our form of wholesom words : Or if it be such as was preached here for twenty years together, we have little reason to be fond of it , or any pains that is taken about it. If they will not hear the
Churches

Churches Gospel, what reason hath the Church to hear theirs ?

To end my first point, If it was wisdom in *St. Paul* to commend a form of words, and in the whole Catholick Church to use one; if the same was practis'd by every reformed Church, and all that people might with peace and security know what to hear: I do not understand what wisdom it can be to lay all common again for any mans pleasure; for this is to legitimate Schism, and entail division to the Church for ever. As you love your selves, your quiet, and look to receive benefit by the immortal seed of Gods Word, if you would be good Christians, that is, be advised by Christ, and in that way which all Christians have used, to *Take heed what you hear.*

We come now to the second point of our care, *Take heed how you hear*, and this no less necessary then the former; for when we have provided for the Matter what we hear, we may yet offend in the Manner how; and so lose the benefit of both.

That which is here set down in proper words, is by our Saviour illustrated in a Similitude, *ver. 21. Is a candle brought to be put*

under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a Candlestick? that is, and so St. *Luke* expresses it, A candle is not brought to be put under a Bushel, but to be set on a Candlestick. This makes two points in the manner of our hearing, one negative, that we do not so hear Gods Word that we put it under a Bushel, another affirmative, that we set it on a Candlestick.

For the first, Gods Word is a light, we can do nothing more contrary to light then to hide it, to put it under a Bushel, *i. e.* to do any thing that will intercept the light and benefit of it. Now this may be done several wayes.

First, By perverting the proper end and use of hearing. Hearing Gods word is certainly a good point of Religion; for it is a duty commanded, *ver. 23. If any man have ears to hear let him hear;* yet if he hear as he should, he must not mistake one kinde of duty for another. Duties are of divers kindes, some essential parts of Religion, some instrumental, and some both. The two chief duties of this time, fasting and hearing, are instrumental onely. That Fasting is so, we learn from St. *Paul. The Kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, i. e.* consists not in it; yet

yet if well used is a help to it. *Instrumenti vis in usu consistit.* If fasting attains not the end and use of it, it is good for nothing, not to be reckon'd in the order of Religious duties. So hearing Gods Word, if it work no amendment in us, is but a Cypher alone that stands for nothing, no better then a Candle under a Bushel.

When hearing is not it self, doth not the own duty, we are extreamly mistaken if we make it serve for any other. Hearing doth edifie, help to the building, but as an Instrument, not as Stone and Timber, the essential parts of it. The Ax and the Hammer, the Square and the Level, are instruments without which there can be no building: but we would think him mad that should therefore lay them in the Walls or the Foundation: They are as much guilty of folly, who make their ordinary worship of God to be nothing but to go hear the Sermon; yea, and the extraordinary, a solemn Fast and Humiliation to hear a Sermon; A publick Thanksgiving to hear a Sermon, and that is all. If any business extraordinary fall out, ^{where-}unto we think fit by our Devotion to ingage Gods blessing and protection, all we do for
his

his sake we sit and hear a Sermon. If the Sermon doth the work of an instrument it is well, to fit and enable us to perform those duties, it self is neither stick nor stone in the Building. We must not think all is done when the Sermon is done.

Psal. 74.

Instruments are of an indifferent nature, may be well or ill used; so are not essentials, as Faith, Repentance, and Charity, are constantly the same. Fasting, I said was an instrumental duty, and so was as well us'd for strife and debate, as for Humiliation and Repentance. We may remember many of those fighting Fasts. He that hew'd Timber before out of the thick Trees was known to bring it to an excellent work; but now they break down all the carved works therof with Axes and Hammers, that is, with the same tools that built it. As Sermons are instruments to build up, at another time they pull down as fast. It is therefore very necessary we take heed how we hear them.

As we must not mistake in the kinde of the duty, an instrumental for an essential; so nor in the kinde of the Instrument: for some are natural, as the eye is of seeing, the ear of hearing; these naturally do their work. Others
posi-

positive of Divine Institution, which have no vertue or power but from that ; and such are the Sacraments. I confesse I never heard any say, that hearing of Gods Word was a Sacrament of Faith: yet I know there is more vertue ascrib'd to it then natural, and by some more then Sacramental ; for no Sacrament they think effectual without a Sermon.

If there be a mistake in the manner and kinde of operation in the Instrument, it will prove another putting the Candle under a Bushel. I hope you will not think it a fruitless curiosity to enquire a little farther into it.

Hearing and Preaching both, for they always go together, are so proper to the Gospel, that by them it is distinguished from the Law; for St. Paul arguing for the Christian Faith against the Jewish, calls it the Hearing of Faith, *Gal. 3. 2. He that ministreth to the spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith?* The like propriety in the Gospel hath preaching; for whatsoever way the wisdom of the world may take, *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, 1 Cor. 1. 21.* And thus by way of distinction the Gospel is call'd the ministration of

of the Spirit, because preached by inspiration of the Spirit, and the Law the ministration of the Letter, because given in writing. 2 Cor. 3. 6. *Who hath made us Ministers of the New Testament, ἐ γράμματι & ἀλλὰ πνεύματι, not of the Letter, but of the Spirit.*

But was there then no hearing nor preaching under the Law? That cannot be said neither. *They have Moses and the Prophets, saith Abraham to Dives, let them hear them.* And the Priest's lips could not preserve knowledge unless it were received from his mouth by hearing. It was commonly practised in the Synagogues after the reading of the Law in the time of the Apostles to exhort the people. When S. Paul and his company went into the Synagogue at *Antioch in Pisidia*, they were desired to give the people a word of exhortation.

Acts 13. 15.

How then comes it to pass that by hearing and preaching, the Christian Religion is distinguished from the Jews, which are common to both? And why is the Law call'd the ministration of the Letter, by way of distinction, seeing the Gospel is written as well as the Law?

'Tis plain that these things are spoken, not simply

simply, and universally of either, but in relation to their beginning and first publishing to the world. Because the Law was then given by writing, though afterwards preached; it is called the ministration of the Letter: So the Gospel, though afterwards written, yet because it was then only preached by revelation of the Holy Ghost, it is call'd the ministration of the Spirit.

That likewise which *S. Paul* speaks of the hearing of Faith, and of saving men by the foolishness of preaching hath a peculiar relation to Christianity in the manner of founding it at first. For certain'y Preaching in it self was not in the eye of humane wisdom a foolish way to perswade, but such as the wisest of them all used: when they would perswade the people any thing, they did it by orations and speeches, which are of the same kinde with preaching.

But if we look at that preaching by which the Christian Religion was at first introduced, it had in the eye of humane wisdom something of folly in it. For to introduce a Law or Religion to any people these two things among others are necessary.

That they give it in Writing, that they
D might

might more certainly know what they had to do, and that it be by such as have authority and power. And this way God himself took in giving the Jews a Law : for first, he wrote it with his own fingers, and then published it by the Ministry of *Moses* who was their leader and governour.

But for the introduction of the Gospel, it pleased God to take a far different course, that is, to commit all to the preaching of a few poor despicable Fisher-men, who were only private men, of no authority; and of whose Gospel they had no knowledge, but from what was to be taken from their mouths. And that when first preached, was by some esteemed no better then a distemper, yea, plain drunkenness: yet, thus it pleased God to put the words of eternal life into these earthen vessels, and by that means to make his own power known, and by that folly to confound the wisdom of the world.

But for our preaching, though it may have many times too good a title to foolishness in preaching, yet not to the foolishness of preaching: for, those obstacles remov'd, it is the ordinary way by which all knowledge, humane as well as divine, is communicated:

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My meaning is, that hearing now is to be looked upon as the common natural instrument to receive instruction, and therefore no benefit to be reckon'd on from it, but what is common to all other learning and knowledge, that is, by serious studying, and diligently pondering the things we hear; for if we trust to any secret, sacramental, mystical vertue in hearing: that profit we should get by the Word we may lose by the Hearing. Therefore *take heed how you hear*; for this is a second way of putting Gods word under a Bushel.

There is another way, which in part at least puts under the Bushel too, when we confine it to the Sermon: whereas that is of little use, if Gods word be not in it; they say, The word is of as little, if it be not in a Sermon, which is a derogation to the goodness and bounty of Almighty God, who hath dispensed his Divine Truth so many wayes besides: as,

First by Reading; for though when Gods Word was preached onely, it could be onely heard; yet when it was a Scripture, it might be known, as all other Writings, by reading also: for this reason S. Paul sets Timothy to his Book, *Till I come give attendance to reading; Search the Scriptures, for therein you*

III.

1 Tim. 4. 13.

think you have eternal life ; and search we cannot unless we read them, that by reading we may finde the way to eternal life : yea, though all were to be done by preaching, Reading is that too : For Moses had in old time them that preached him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-day, Acts 15. 21.

Secondly, By writing, Gods Word works Faith in us, if S. *John* was not mistaken when he said, *These things have I written unto you, that ye may know ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God.* Good writers are in their kinde good Preachers. Why then should any be scandalized at the Preacher, that looks upon his Book where his Sermon is written. Indeed, if men now were to speak as the Apostles did, as the Spirit gave them utterance, it were a great mistake to look for him in a Book : But if we, as all must take Gods Word out of the Scripture ; and every Preacher, if he be not too bold with God and his Auditors, that he may speak from thence what is both true and seasonable, prepares by writing that which he is to preach ; the Sermon is the same in the Pulpit that it was in the study, and though the Preacher that looks in his Book be the worse, the Sermon I am sure is not. We

1 Joh. 5. 13.

3. We may receive the fruit of God's Word in the virtuous life and example of others; for this S^t Paul calls the *holding forth the Word of Life*, Phil. 2. 16. *That ye may be blameless, the Sons of God, without rebuke, holding forth the Word of Life; i. e.* it is visible and legible in all our actions and demeanour. Thus a Man may be a Preacher of God's Word, though he be not in Orders: Yea, Women, that are forbidden to speak in the Church, may thus convert their Husbands at home. *Likewise, ye Wives be in subjection to your Husbands, that if any obey not the Word* (that is, when it is preached) *they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the Wife.* So powerful and effectual is God's Word, that it works by example, though on the weakest Vessels.

There be divers ways of preaching in the more proper sense, besides the Sermon; for preaching is either publick or private, as we learn from S^t Paul, *Acts* 20. 20. where he gives account to the Elders of *Ephesus* of himself, *That he had taught them publickly, and from house to house.* Sure he did not make a formal Sermon in every house he came into, but as occasion and opportunity

was

III.

I Pet. I:

IV.

was given, by Conference he made known to them the Will of God.

V. *§.* Again, Publick preaching is not all of a kind ; for that may be, either by *laying the Foundation, the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, as the Apostle calls them, *Heb. 6. 1.* which we call Catechising. If this be not Preaching, if *laying the Foundation* be not edifying, we shall make but a sorry Building. If this Foundation of Faith be not well laid, every new wind of Doctrine that rises blows it straight down again.

In these several ways, besides the Sermon, is God's Word effectual. Now if we put all these under the bushel, and set up the Sermon only, we had ~~need~~ need take heed how ~~how~~ we hear that ; for if that wherein all our hope and confidence lies should go under the bushel too, we are in a sad case.

It will therefore neerly concern us to take heed, That God's Word be not lost in the Sermon, *i. e.* that the power of it, which consists in the evident conviction of truth, be not lost in formalities and impertinences, commonly us'd in Sermons.

As when little regard is given by some to God's Word, unless the Sermon presents it
self

self dress'd up with all the curiosities of Art, Language, and Phansie too; which sometimes so disguises it, as it can hardly be known from a Poem. But for the true use of Ornaments of Art and Speech, if they make us love our duties the more, as they make us more in love with hearing, I should think it well bestow'd. But if painted Sermons be like painted Glasse, that makes a Room beautiful, but intercepts too much the light, it may well go in the rank too of those things which put God's Word under the bushel.

The same is done too with a coarser sort of Forms, which have no title to be divine, but that they want humane Learning. And yet if God's Word be not in that jejune formal dress, it will not be so kindly received by those who out of a seeming tenderness of the liberty of God's Word, are afraid that the Churches Form should bind it, and spare not to fetter it in cold formalities of their own, in which it languisheth to nothing.

Again, God's Word must needs be put under a bushel, when it is put into the bushel; I mean, when it is heard by measure: I do not mean the measure of Faith here in the Text, the measure of the Sanctuary; but the

the common Market-measure ; as when we must have an Hour-glass full at least, and somewhat running over, to make a just Sermon ; though the particulars be as incoherent both with the Text and themselves, as the sand that measures them ; yet if it runs on smoothly, and fills up the time, all is well.

There is as little good from Sermons when they are heard by tale ; if we have not our full number, as well as our full measure, two at the least a day, the poor people are starv'd.

They would pity my simplicity, if I should take upon me to confute it out of vain Philosophy, and tell them out of it, That *quantitatis nulla est efficacia* : I shall, with their good leaves, from *S^t Paul*, (out of the place I named before) to *Timothy*, shew them, That there is no efficacy in quantity : What a bed-roll of sins doth he lay at their doors that heap to themselves Teachers ? There was a heap of sins under a heap of Sermons. And no wonder ; for being after their owne lust, the more commonly the worse.

2 Tim. 3. 1.

There be many other things to be taken heed of in hearing, which intercept and obstruct the light of God's Word : But because the time wears away, I will add but one more.

That

That out of ignorance or ill will we do not misconstrue what we hear ; as *S^t Peter* observ'd some to do with *S^t Paul's* Epistles, which they wrested to their own destruction.

And this I rather add in my own defence, lest that which is spoken in favour of hearing, should be interpreted a discouragement to it ; because people generally are not so well affected as they should be to so good a duty, who had more need of fire to heat them, than Water to cool them.

It had been to better purpose, you will say, if I had taken my Text out of *S. James* ; *Be swift to hear.*

But I beseech you not to be mistaken. That which hath been said doth not take us off our speed : We may be still as swift to hear as our Zeal can carry us. It puts us only in our right way, that we do not run in vain. It is only to take God's Word from under the bushel, where it doth no good ; that we may set it on the candlestick, from whence we may receive the light of it, and in that the benefit of our Saviour's advice, to *take heed how we hear* ; which is the second part of our care in the affirmative, by setting Gods Word on the candlestick.

E

To

To set God's Word ^{on} the Candlestick, is to set it where we may receive the light of it; and that is, first,

- I. By a particular use and application of it to our selves that hear; for though Preachers have commonly these words in their Sermons, Uses, and Application, and they know best why they use them, I do not; for sure I am, they are more proper to the Hearers. The Preacher gives the Doctrine, but the Hearers must make the Use and Application. No Preacher can say, as *Nathan* to *David*, *Thou art the Man*; unless he have a special Commission, as he had from God. No Preacher hath access to our Consciences; at that Bar every man must be his own Judge and Witness, and as there shall be cause, pronounce Sentence against himself, *Thou art the Man*.

If we sit at the Sermon as men unconcern'd for any thing but the hearing of it, to us it is all one as if it had been still under the Bushel, and not upon the Candlestick.

If we hear, and make no use of it, we leave out the best part of the Sermon; for the Hearers make bad Sermons, as well as Preachers.

But when a fault or error is reprehended,
must

must every Hearer pronounce himself guilty ! Certainly No ; for that were injustice to condemn the innocent. Though the Sermon condemns not every man that hears it, yet it puts every man upon his trial, to let the light into his own bosom, to see whether he be guilty or not. If guilty, let him do as guilty men do , sue for mercy, and pardon, and amendment : If not guilty, let him enjoy the comfort of that, *If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God, 1 Joh. 3. 21. And happy is he that condemneth not himself, Rom. 14. 22.* Guilty, or not guilty, we have benefit by the light that actually shines upon us ; for so it doth in the Candlestick.

A light in a Candlestick enlightens every one alike that comes into the room. If a light be brought to us which none can see but he that brings it, it may very well be suspected to be none of God's Lights, because it will not stand in a Candlestick, so as to be seen by others. And many such there be, who must be allowed to hold special intelligence with God, and by private illumination from the Spirit, see clearer and farther into the darkest Mysteries than any of the Doctors or Rabbies.

II.

They put me in minde of some, though not the best sort of Creatures, yet in the dark see better then others; as the Owle, the Cat, and the Bat: of which I have known Philosophers give this reason: That rayes of light do naturally stream from their eyes, by which the *Medium* and Aire about is enlightened; This at best, if there be any such, is a light which none sees but them^{-selves}. Now if those illuminated seers be such that their light is not where Gods Word should be in a Candlestick, where it may be seen of all, it is indeed no better then Owles light that shines onely out of their own eyes.

III.

A light in a Candlestick doth not only enlighten all the persons, but all the parts also of the room, every corner, the darkest and most secret places: it shines not only upon our cloathes and faces, (*i. e.*) our outward fashion and demeanor, but as God requireth truth in the inward parts, thither must the light go too, to the most retired Closets and Cabinets within, to the very thoughts and intentions of the heart. It is sharper then any two-edged Sword that enters between the joint and the marrow. Light will pierce through where

Psal. 51. 6.

Heb. 4. 12.

where no Sword can go, at the least hole and crevise. If all our actions of greatest secrecy receive not light and direction from Gods Word, we do not set it in a Candlestick, for there nothing is hid from the light thereof.

A Candle in a Candlestick, as it gives light to every part of the room, so it doth to all the work and business in it. It shews not only the end of all eternal rest and happiness, but is a light unto the paths that lead to it. It holds us not only upon the gaze of the glory and joyes of heaven, but carries us through the darker mysteries of faith, and the more unpleasing wayes of Repentance and Mortification. The Gospel is not the power of God to salvation, unless it be also the power of God upon all the steps and degrees to it. In a Candlestick it is a light all over, from one side of the room to the other.

IV.

Lastly, From Gods Word in a Candlestick, we do *Totam lucem recipere*, take the benefit of the whole light in all the effects and operations of it. It is a word of instruction, a word of exhortation, a word of comfort, a word of reproof, a word of promise, and a word

V.

word of command, and so serves us in all our necessities. It instructs the ignorant, corrects the obstinate, comforts the dejected, dejects the proud, quiets the passions, invites by promises, binds by commands.

If we pick and chuse, lay hold on the word of consolation, not of correction; of promises, not of commands. We take the light as men do out of a dark Lanthorn, from one side onely, no more then looks towards our private ends and interest. But in a Candlestick the light dilates it self impartially in all the several powers of it; there is no parcelling or dividing in that, all or none; we must *totam lucem recipere*.

So much difference we see there is between Gods Word in a Candlestick, and under a Bushel; and how much benefit comes by the one, and how little by the other. If we take not heed to this, we fall into the common, but dangerous error, That when we have heard the Sermon, we have done our duty for that time, though we neither heed what or how we hear. And yet according to that onely, Sermons are, as *S. Paul* speaks of them in the person of the Preacher, a favour of life, or a favour of death. As the evil servant was
judg'd

judg'd out of his own mouth, so shall the
careless hearer out of his own ears. And more
I could not say, if I had more time. It is that
whereon life or death depends ; therefore
Take heed what you hear.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

P Ag. 6. lin. 7. for *difference* r. *difficulty*. p. 9. l. 13. make the *Comma* at after.
l. 21. for *power* r. *proper*. p. 14. l. 15. *quis custodiet*. p. 17. l. ult. for *shall* r.
should. p. 21. l. penult. for *bereunso* r. *whereunso*. p. 19. l. 1. in marg. insert III.
l. 18. for *on* r. in. p. 3. l. 3. in marg. insert V. l. 16. dele *need*. l. 17. dele *how*. p. 36.
l. 9. for *them* r. *themselves*.

